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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/CM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV CH

SUBJECT: SHANGRI LA CONFERENCE: EVFM DAI BINGGUO WILL NOT ATTEND

Classified By: Political External Unit Chief Edgard D. Kagan. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

(C) Executive Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo will not attend the upcoming Shangri-La conference despite having been invited by Singapore and urged to go by "several" countries. MFA Asian Department Regional Security Affairs Director Ma Jia told us May 11 that Dai had thought seriously about attending but has a scheduling conflict that cannot be changed. Stressing that the PRC has yet to make a final decision on participation, Ma said that China is well aware of criticism from other countries for not sending a sufficiently senior representative to previous Shangri-La Conferences. She commented that the possibility that EVFM Dai (who has ministerial rank) might attend sparked considerable discussion within the Chinese Government. Expressing doubt that a senior MFA official will go in Dai's place, Ma said that a senior Ministry of National Defense official may lead the PRC delegation. Noting that she is pushing for such an outcome and expressing cautious optimism, Ma hesitated to predict the final result.

RANDT